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DISCOURSE COMPONENTS

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This outline follows the same pattern as my previous 'Components' outlines and is a preliminary attempt at organizing into a coherent whole the various strands of discourse analysis. The semantic structures section aims at being a universal grid which will need to be modified for each language. The surface structures section is only briefly suggestive of some of the kinds of structures that may be encountered.

The categories listed here (especially the genres) are suggestive, not exhaustive (is an exhaustive listing possible?).[1] It is hoped that the major categories will eventually be polished to where they can handle (with fuzzy borders) all conceivable genres; an optimal categorization of genres may turn out to be radically different from that proposed here. But the degree of refinement (or 'delicacy' in Firthian terms) will always be a matter of purpose and taste, as will also be the assignment of borderline cases. Such is language.

Readers desiring more detailed introduction to the terminology and the approach embodied in these 'Components' outlines are referred to my 'An invitation to grammar'. (Preliminary draft available in the library of each SIL school, revised draft in press, Mahidol University, Bangkok.)

I. SEMANTIC STRUCTURES

A. Propositional Content

1. Nuclear genres

a. Event-centered

i. Autobiographical

My encounter at the post office

What I plan to do today

ii. Biographical

Mr. Smith's car accident

c. Item-centered
   i. Explanatory
      The computer and how it works
      A commentary on the book of Ruth
      Who is Howard Hughes?
   ii. Developmental
      Ships through the ages
      How our alphabet was developed
   iii. Listing
      The Guiness book of world records
      The genealogy of David
   iv. Descriptive
      Huahin Bay at sunset
   v. Evaluative
      My impressions of Eisenhower
      Annual report of the IBM company
      A eulogy for Einstein.

2. Theme types
   a. Simple (one episode)
   b. Climactic sequence
   c. Repartee
   d. Episodic
   e. Embedding
   f. Rambling
3. Compounding
   a. Contrastive: opposing events, blind alleys
   b. Equivalent: illustration, amplification, preview, section heading, summary, overlay
   c. Additive: cycles, closeknit sequences
4. Peripheral elements
   a. Setting: time, location, circumstances, background
   b. Introducing the participants
   c. Conclusion
   d. Finis

a. Vocabulary repetition
b. Lexical domains
7. Ellipsis (deletion)
8. Prominence
a. Thematic prominence
b. Emphasis (special)
9. Vividness devices

D. Presupposition
1. General encyclopedia: universal, cultural, contextual
2. Expected script development
3. Contraexpectancies
4. Rhetorical forms (contrary to normal genre)
a. A thematic letter disguised as a ramble
b. An exhortation disguised as a narrative

II. SURFACE STRUCTURES

A. Nuclear forms
1. Simple (one paragraph)
2. Margin-linked
3. Conjunction-linked
4. Juxtaposed
5. Embedding

B. Variant forms
1. Fronted climax
2. Fronted denouement
3. Reversed temporal sequence
4. Delayed introduction of participants, etc.

C. Peripheral slots (see I.A.4).

D. Form prosodies and cohesion
1. Intonation
2. Head and tail linkage
3. Boundary markers
4. Structural parallelism
5. Structural prominence (normal)